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THE ATTITUDE
—OF THE—
FRENCH CANADIAN RACE
—AND—
SEPARATE SCHOOLS,

SPEECH DELIVERED BY MR. W. H. BARRY, AT CASSELMAN, ON
30TH MAY, 1890.

The largest public meeting ever held at Casselman took place in the Town Hall on Friday the 30th May, 1890, it having been called in the interests of Alexander Robillard, Esq., who was contesting the County of Russell in the Liberal cause during the recent Provincial Elections. The hall was crowded to its utmost capacity, many persons being unable to get admission. Mayor Quesneville presided, and after Dr. Savard had addressed the audience in French, the Chairman said it was now his pleasing duty to introduce to the electors, a barrister of Ottawa who had already proved himself a friend to the French Canadian, and was well-known for his liberality of sentiment towards those of other nationalities and now he appeared before them as a supporter of Mr. Alexander Robillard.

MR. BARRY who was received with applause said :—

The large assemblage here to-night and the enthusiasm with which you have greeted Mr. Robillard augur well for his successful return. But although we are now somewhat kindly disposed towards each other, the spirit in which this campaign has opened is exceedingly to be regretted ; for whatever may have been our differences heretofore on political questions, they were never embittered by religious feelings until the leader of the Tory party in our Province rang out in his London speech the key-note for the revival of intolerance and prejudice which old quarrels

of creed and pride of race had allowed to smoulder in the breasts of his countrymen. One would have thought that in the interval between the delivery of this address and the close of the debate on the dual languages in the Commons, Mr. Meredith would have deemed it proper to repent of his former utterances, on being made aware that he was dilating on questions which on account of numerous other claims on his time and attention, he had not carefully examined nor perfectly understood, and that his appeals to the passions of the people could do nothing other than serious harm. But the discussion at Ottawa profited him in no manner, because the mind of a bigot is like the pupil of the eye, the more light you throw on it the more it contracts, and actuated by the ancient spirit of domination, which in this country as in others has always characterized pure unadulterated Toryism, he thought political capital could be made out of the movement by endeavoring to open the flood-gates of passion, which, once aroused, no human power may stem, and by inciting national and religious bias he might set up the strong and numerous against the weaker minority and ride into power over the prostitution of the most sacred rights and privileges. (Applause.)

But you, gentlemen, are not deceived by the extravagance of his speech and by his exuberance of sophistry. His flourishes of exaggeration exercise a different influence on your minds, and just as "the diamond breastpin sometimes kills the social effect of the wearer who might have passed for a gentleman without it," so the effulgence of bigotry betrays the shallow politician whom people otherwise might have believed to be a statesman. (Applause.)

The fever of bad feeling had about subsided when, under the guise of political expediency, Mr. Meredith renewed his attacks on the issue of his manifesto to the electors at the Pavilion meeting in Toronto. He set out with the proposition that for homogeneity in a nation, unity of language is necessary and the abolition of Separate Schools must of course follow, and from the tone of his address one could not otherwise than conclude that he regarded the French Canadians as a secondary and inferior people, and intended to impress his audience with that view.

But all his statements are equally fallacious. He well knew when he asked his hearers to accept as truth what he addressed to them, that it is not by language and community of language alone that men are formed into a nation. That history is a testimony to the opposite teaching, that no matter in what tongue the Saxon, Celt, Indian or Negro may express his thoughts his ethnical condition will remain unchanged, and he will think and feel in sympathy with the people of the nation from which he sprung. But, in point of fact, gentlemen, was there ever a nation of importance which at some period of its existence, either early or late, was not composed of various races speaking different languages? No. Tradition does not inform us of any state which acquired lasting greatness wherein one language alone was continuously spoken.

Germany, after the peace of Westphalia, illustrates what Mr. Meredith would call a country homogenous in language and according to him on such account should have been bound fast together by the ties of national spirit. But what has been the result? History tells of no people more torn by internal dissensions, rebellious and internecine strife until it was divided up into the states which now compose Austria and the German Empire.

Of the various nations of Europe Italy, Portugal, Denmark and Greece are the only ones with unity of languages, yet no one pretends that they are prosperous peoples.

It is not by assimilation of language that a homogenous people is made, but by oneness of sentiment and purpose, a union of hearts, and this should be the object of every honest citizen who is anxious to form a nation. This is the problem and we look for the solution, and if efforts are made to antagonize French Canadian fellow citizens they will be more exclusive if they are deprived of what they consider their rights and the crusade against them will have the effect of making their language more permanent, and perhaps of dispelling forever their confidence in us which we have so proudly and honorably won. (Applause.) Ought not profit to be now made from the experience of the past. We know that down to the rebellion of 1837 the French held themselves aloof from English-speaking fellow subjects and were regarded as an alien and a hostile race, but afterwards and following the union a different feeling began to set in and another state of affairs prevailed and created the most unswerving loyalty to the British Crown and Canada, and had it not been for the wisdom, moderation and generosity of England at that time towards all races and creeds we would not have a British Colony here to-day.

There must be no compulsion to discontinue the French language. It must be left to the voluntary action of the people.

Russia tried to force its language on the Poles, but the persecution to which they were subjected made their language more dear and more studied and added more to its permanence and dissemination than any other efforts, while it gave to this country a large number of thrifty and welcome immigrants.

Alsace was German at one time but became transferred to France, and being governed by the kind and tolerant spirit of her new ruler she came to love France who had conquered her and adopt the French language, and to-day when the Germans are trying to accomplish what the Equal Righters and Tories aim at in Ontario, they have eliminated the affections of the Alsations, many of whom have left the country while others who remain are so disaffected that they are only kept in subjugation by the presence of a large standing army.

We should therefore feel kindly disposed towards French Canadians, to esteem them as our English-speaking countrymen, and whenever a desirable change is proposed in which they are interested we should approach them with the deference due to their high importance and

great worth, as nothing at the present day can be accomplished by coercion. This is a Tory method of ruling which proceeds not from the higher and nobler instincts of the human heart or affection for those who are governed, but arises from the dread, the diffidence and the distrust of the Tory party, which was ever suspicious and tyrannical. Be just then to your fellow French Canadians. (Loud applause.) If Mr. Meredith wants a united people he must lay down a law for Ontario that shall apply to Canada, to the whole British Empire, and this shall not be merely a unity in language, as when this election is over he will learn to his sorrow and his wisdom, but that oneness of sentiment and union of hearts, which are attained only by forbearance, tolerance and affection, are the surer homogeneity for the building up of a prosperous people. (Applause and cheers.)

We now come to the question of Separate Schools. When referring to the subject in his Pavillion speech in Toronto Mr. Meredith said: "It seems to me that we did away with the connection between Church and State with regard to Protestant domination but that the condition is to exist with regard to the Roman Catholic religion in this Province of Ontario. Against this proposition I intend to exert my utmost influence. It can never be permitted in this free county that the Catholic Church shall absorb the functions of the State. We have determined that one of the foundations of our government is that the education of the young belongs to the State and that it is the duty of the State to see that every child is instructed and every citizen contributes to the support and education of every child in the State." And further on he adds: "an agitation ought from this hour to arise and be continued until the Separate Schools are swept away by its force." In reply to this onslaught against his Roman Catholic fellow citizens, I tell Mr. Meredith that the privileges they enjoy are guaranteed by the act of confederation and were the indispensable concession for carrying into effect the union of the Provinces in the Dominion. That it is now a settled controversy not to be reopened, and it is the duty of those who truly regard the progress and prosperity of Canada, who wish to see it advance on the path towards nationality, to defend the rights of the minorities as by law and by convention and by national sentiment established. (Applause.) In this agitation of which he speaks he encourages race against race, creed against creed, Roman Catholics against their hierarchy, and his conduct is certainly to be deprecated by all honest men. Can a more flagrant violation of the liberty of conscience and liberty of teaching of which he has so often boasted be conceived in Canada than to openly insult a man because of his religion.

He well knows that the teaching of the Catholic Church is that the State has no right to bring up children; that not even parents simply as parents have the right or the duty in the matter of education. It is to the Church alone belongs the right and the duty to educate children but the State has the right and the duty to oblige children to be educated by the Church.

Catholics understand education to have a two-fold object, the teaching of the truth and the formation of a virtuous character; that religion is this means to the end, and it is reasonable to conclude that in many cases if religion be not taught in schools little effort will be made to form the children's moral character at home, especially when parents are absent for the greater part of the day or are themselves wanting in religious education and for many other and graver reasons.

Perhaps Mr. Meredith and his unequal righters may say, as Mr. Broder told us yesterday at Duncanville, that Sunday schools and the administration of justice will supply the necessity of further religious teaching. But it is a fact, undisputed, that not one half of those attending public schools present themselves for instruction on Sunday. What will then become of the other half of young society and what will be their end whose sparse intellectual light without moral warmth is scarcely conducive to ensure to them a healthy social future and who through poverty or other causes are allowed but a few years of imperfect early training, though they require more encouragement to bear up against the present adversities of life?

The teaching of obedience to the laws of the country as enforced by our courts and discussed in parliament, is an insufficient substitute for public school religious education. These only deal with transgressions that lie on the surface of human depravity, while countless violations committed in secret are never brought to light. How can these laws reach the merchant, the statesman, the magistrate who wrong the people with whom they come in contact? How do they restrain the private immorality of passionate youth or the secret infidelity of wedded love? Will Mr. Meredith or his adherents answer this difficulty? The laws may to a certain extent arrest public disorder but they cannot reach the heart of the offender who plans his mischief in the dark and consummates his villany in the attics or the cellars where dwell his accomplices of crime.

I ask you, gentlemen electors, here to-night, if it be honorable and fair because on such grounds Catholics have conscientiously formed a religious belief, that they should be insulted for their convictions? Is it tolerant and just and consistent with the principles of British liberty that any one will seek to incite his fellow citizens to agitate until by force Roman Catholics will be deprived of the privileges which they are, and have ever been, generously disposed to grant to other denominations.

Experience has taught that in the moral training of youth depends in a great measure the safety of society hereafter. That the principles instilled at school and subsequently developed in active life are those which influence the public opinion of the day. Instruction without moral training has produced the religious indifference of the present, and consequently the disrespect for authority so widespread, and the doctrines of socialism, anarchy and other hurtful principles against social order.

As all authority comes from God and as our sovereign queen proclaims that she reigns by Divine grace, no one can have due respect for or be a truly loyal citizen who is not a religiously educated man, and this is what His Excellency our late Governor General had in view when addressing the faculty and students of Ottawa University; and well knowing how such education favorably influences proper regard for the majesty of the law and strengthens the loyalty of the subject, he said:—
 “A college such as yours is doing a work the importance of which it is impossible to overrate. It is the great factory in which the raw material is shaped, polished and sent for active service into the world. I am glad to know that part of the equipment you receive here consists in the acquisition of feelings of loyalty to the sovereign and attachment to imperial connection. That is, I believe, the feeling which the church whose influence rules supreme within these walls loses no opportunity of inculcating. I recognize the importance of inculcating these loyal sentiments in the rising generation. Your fathers have given you a united Canada. It will be for you who are growing up and will some day take their places to maintain that union and guide the fortunes of the country in the right direction. I trust you will be faithful to the sound teachings which you have received here and will continue to believe in the unity of the empire as we in the old country believe in it.”

This is the doctrine of Her Majesty by her viceroy and against which Mr. Meredith intends to exert his utmost influence. (Applause.)

If such teaching have no effect on the agitators against creed, I would also recall the significant coincidence that about the time of Mr. Meredith's London speech the Honorable Mr. Gladstone and Lord Salisbury in England both expressed the one opinion that in view of the present condition of society never greater than now was religious instruction needed in schools, because a man who is indifferent in religion, is indifferent to the constituted authority of the land, an indifferent citizen, an indifferent husband, an indifferent father.

If the one opinion of these eminent parliamentarians be entitled to any weight, a preponderance in their favor will undoubtedly be given when it is contrasted with the utterances of Mr. Meredith, who from his small experience is a mere inferior politician in comparison with these great statesmen of England who have passed their lives in the busy arena of public affairs.

Notwithstanding this wholesome advice Mr. Meredith insisted in his pavillion speech that the evil of Separate Schools divided us into two hostile camps, Protestant and Catholic, when we should be living together as man and man.

Gentlemen, I would ask you to pardon me for offering a personal instance to reply to this unfounded charge. I have passed the earlier and happier period of my boyhood and youth under the influence of denominational schools; I have the honor to be a graduate of a Catholic university and throughout my entire student life, I never heard other counsels than to honor and respect and have the like affection for

those who differed from us in creed as for those in my own religion. (Applause.) And as a humble member of that great Catholic Church, while endeavoring to put into practice the teachings therein received I have had from my first years friends among many denominations. I may say, I have lived at my profession almost exclusively by the patronage of those separated from me by religious belief. The greatest personal sacrifice I ever made was for a Protestant and I earnestly hope that the last act of my life may be one of generosity and kindness to a Protestant fellow-citizen if it be only as a protest against this persistent calumny. (Loud applause and cheers).

Mr. Meredith has told me that I am more liberally disposed than the rest of my co-religionists towards those of other faiths, and I had to apologize for differing from his opinion, because among the vast number of Roman Catholics with whom I have come in contact, whom I have long known and with whom I am intimately acquainted, counting among my friends many of the clergy and episcopacy, I have never yet heard any statement or utterance from them inconsistent with the experience I have just mentioned; but they have, moreover, always expressed the wish that Protestant churches flourish rather than that the godless intention of banishing religion from schools should ever become a reality.

There is no hope, no possibility of educating together children of different creeds, because conflicting questions will constantly arise in history, literature, in the arts and sciences which even the most impartial teacher cannot expound without incurring the risk of wounding the religious feelings of some of his pupils. We must then ask Mr. Meredith to allow the discussion to cease, because religion will never be banished from denominational schools.

The Equal Rights party acknowledge that they do not expect to attain their object now, that it is only the beginning of a movement which will in the distant future take effect, that it is in keeping with the progress and enlightenment of the age, and before such legislation is adopted many other extraordinary changes may take place.

As to the remoteness of the law there is every expectation, but as being a step towards advancement no loyal man admits. From the time when Christianity was first introduced into Britain down to the present day the right of religious teaching in schools has always been acknowledged by the people, who by conquest or by cession ruled the destinies of our country or the lands which gave our fathers birth. Governments and nations arose and fell but the right still remains. It existed before Ontario was a recognized territorial division of our Dominion, and there is every assurance it will continue after the provincial boundaries have disappeared. It was respected on the banks of the Ottawa when the Iroquois first learned his religious truths and bowed before Christian altars, and it may still exist in that remote and distant future of extraordinary changes after the zenith of Canada's civilization is passed, when some traveller from the arctic circle shall

pitch his tent amid the ruins of our legislative halls on Parliament hill, and surveying the awful desolation of the stately remains of our once great and proud capital wherein dwelt godless and good men, and in the solemn loneliness of his surroundings he may truthfully exclaim, O, home of freedom of conscience, of teaching and of worship, where no man suffered for his belief, and no altar was subverted for the number or condition of its worshippers, nobly have you used liberty, that last and best gift of God to man, and well done your duty. Such admirable example has been the safeguard and guide of successive nations and peoples. (Loud applause.)

A nation is judged by the social and political history of its subjects ; and according to their virtue and courage, truthfulness and self-sacrifice will the foundation be more enduring for an admirable structure of great permanence and power, and for the building up of national honor and respect every one should concur in bringing into relief the prominent traits and especial excellencies of those among whom we dwell.

In Canada above all others the French Canadians deserve the first place. (Applause.) When none of us had the courage for the vastness of the undertaking they won this country by perilous expeditions, by hewing down the forest and conquering the savage, and they crowned their heroic efforts by surpassing all others in the success attained in the cultivation of the highest intellectual tastes.

Yet this is the race which, still full of its primitive vitality, Mr. Meredith would have you believe an inferior people. This is the race which gave patriots like Papineau, Parent and Joly, which adorned the bench with judges like Morin, Lafontaine and Dorion, which gave poets like Cremazie and Frechette, and orators like Chapleau and Laurier. Have we among our English-speaking people historians as famous as Ferland, Garneau and Sulte? Have we prose writers equal to Gerin Lajoie, Chauveau, Abbé Casgrain, Abbe Verreau, Marmette and Faucher de St. Maurice. Royalty in Europe has honored Mr. Baillerge as a mathematician, and Mr. Tache has acquired fame in architecture. Pierre Boucher was knighted for his natural history, while Abbe Laflamme, Abbe Provencher and St. Cyr are among prominent scientific writers. In painting have we any superior to Hamal for portraits, Plamondon for religious subjects, and Legare and Bourassa for studies from nature and from life ; and in sculpture no one will question the unrivalled excellence of Hebert, whose high talent has been lately acknowledged by the French nation. And who can sing more ravishingly than Albani, or play more exquisitely than Deseve ?

The French Canadian University of Laval has the most notable gallery of paintings in our Dominion and the rarest collection of manuscripts, and the Legislature of Quebec is alone among the provinces in the publication of their archives.

If these be the contemptible people whom Mr. Meredith despises I would like to know what must be the degree of English insignificance when compared with such excellence ?

No person who has not lived among them and enjoyed the friendship of the various classes and heard and investigated for himself would credit the extensive system of untruthfulness pursued by Tory writers and speakers respecting the French Canadians, and whether their falsehoods be those of wilfulness or of prejudice, ignorance or indolence there is no distinction to be made in the guilt. These envious slander-seekers scrape the sewers of foulest calumny to roughcast the French Canadians with plentiful defilement. This misrepresentation reminds one of the barbarity of old heathen persecutors who wrapped up Christians in the skins of wild beasts so they might be worried and torn by dogs. But we all well know that it is enough to have Equal Righters paint even an angel, let alone a French Canadian, black to make him pass for a very devil. (Laughter and applause.)

But what can be more suicidal, more insane than to perpetuate in this land, almost fresh from the hands of the Creator, where we all have hitherto stood on equal rights, these quarrels which have dimmed the fame of other countries? Belonging as we do to different denominations none of us are entitled to pre-eminence or ascendancy over the other, although each numbers among its members vast proportions of our population. How can we ever expect to succeed unless by a mutual forbearance and a generous brotherly feeling? On all of us then is the sacred obligation to aid in the suppression of these sectional quarrels and differences which feed upon their own excesses. We must therefore be more than French, Irish or Scotch, we must be Canadians, and no matter from what countries we sprung let us be thoroughly identified with the land in which our lot is cast, and become as soon as possible assimilated with the social body in all things appertaining to the domain of our civil life. (Applause.)

If the appeals to passion now made were successful whom would they profit? Not the Tories because they are the utterances of their leaders who are followed in blind party allegiance. They are intended only to affect the wavering Liberals who fearing perhaps for the safety of our Province might be seduced into the Conservative party lines. Did the movement end here and were it a mere party device it might not occasion much alarm; but it is a political skirmish with the ultimate object of a general onslaught on the French Canadians and Catholics of the Province and the attainment of Protestant ascendancy. No other conclusion can be drawn from the frequently repeated statement that if it be not done by legislation now it will be accomplished in the future by force of arms. This is the appeal rung out again and again by which Mr. Meredith seeks to acquire power; with whom gratitude is an abstract of the past and expediency the promise of the future. But his political career will not last long, fanaticism never lasted and this is fanaticism with all its force and vigor, which is at variance with all traditions of British Government and fatal to the hope once entertained of building up a Canadian nation. (Applause.)

But remember, Liberals, when your fathers ran up their colors and

fought for freedom and constitutional government it was not for civil liberty alone but for civil and religious liberty, and only after a hard and enduring struggle was the justness of their cause acknowledged. To-day you are called upon to rally again and defend the compact for true and equal rights for all then wrung by them from Tory oppressors even at the cost of ancestral blood. You are asked to uphold the rights of the minorities under the guidance of that great and noble leader the Honorable Oliver Mowat (Applause) the man without fear and without reproach; to bury Mr. Broder in political *oblivion* and return to parliament Mr. Alexander Robillard who has been your tried and faithful representative in the past; and when the glorious and auspicious day of the 5th of June, 1890 will break upon you recall the patriotism and disinterestedness of former years and unfurl once more the Liberal banner of "Civil and Religious Liberty to all"—"Protection to the Minorities" and in this sign, you shall conquer. (Loud cheering and applause.)
